

Hoffman Estates - With Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Illinois State Police and others standing in support, Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) urged swift Senate action on a package of recently passed Internet safety bills, including her own, SAFER NET, H.R. 3461.

“The Internet has transformed our society and our economy. I’m always encouraged to see how readily our children take to the Internet, as it will be a vital tool for them when they grow up,” Congresswoman Bean said. “But the Internet is not a toy. It holds real dangers for children. We have to be sure that as our children explore the online world, we also teach them how to be safe, and we pursue those who would do them harm.”

Attorney General Madigan, who has been aggressive in her efforts to bring Internet safety education to all Illinois parents and children, praised Bean’s legislation. Madigan and her staff routinely provide Internet safety programs at Illinois schools.

“Online safety is now an essential part of a child’s’ education,” said Attorney General Madigan. “Congresswoman Bean’s legislation will ensure that Internet safety outreach and education efforts have the necessary resources to be successful.”

Madigan and Bean spoke at Eisenhower Junior High School in Hoffman Estates. They were joined by the Illinois State Police, local law enforcement, school officials and students.

SAFER NET, or the Safeguard America’s Families by Enhancing and Reorganizing New and Efficient Technologies Act, has three components. First, it authorizes \$5 million for a national public awareness campaign through the Federal Trade Commission. The campaign will include some common sense tips on how to protect your bank account, your identity and your children from victimization on the Internet.

Second, the bill calls on the FTC to become a national clearinghouse for existing resources on Internet safety, making it easier for schools and parents to find reliable information. Federal government resources, non-profit sites, local and national law enforcement resources will all be linked through the FTC’s existing OnGuardOnline program. Information will be available at <http://onguardonline.gov/>

“The FTC stands ready to expand its existing public education campaign on Internet safety – OnGuardOnline.gov – as envisioned by Representative Bean’s legislation,” said FTC Midwest Region Staff Attorney Bill Hodor.

Third, the bill encourages increased industry accountability, by establishing a working group through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to review and evaluate industry efforts to promote online safety and protect children from inappropriate material online.

Bean’s bill is part of an Internet safety initiative moved by the U.S. House last week, which included passage of two other bills she was proud to cosponsor.

Bean helped introduce H.R. 3845, the PROTECT Act (Providing Resources Officers and Technology to Eradicate Cyber Threats to our Children Act). The bill, authored by Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) will build a strong nationwide network of highly trained law enforcement experts to track down known sex offenders. It provides resources for following offenders’ Internet footprints online.

Bean is also a co-sponsor of H.R. 719, the KIDS Act (Keeping the Internet Devoid of Sexual Predators Act). The bill, authored by Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), requires sex offenders to register their e-mail and instant message addresses with the National Sex Offender Registry, as they now register their physical addresses.

On the state level, Madigan earlier this year unveiled the Internet Safety Education Act, which takes effect in January 2008 and is designed to encourage Illinois schools to adopt an age-appropriate Internet safety curriculum for student in grades K through 12. She also partners with key organizations throughout the state, including the Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs and the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, to expand the reach of Internet safety education. Her office has developed new training tools for law enforcement officials focusing on the potential problems caused by emerging social networking Web sites aimed at very young children, such as Club Penguin and Webkinz, which create the risk that children as young as six will begin to feel comfortable chatting with strangers online.

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